



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

810 Vermont Ave NW  
Washington DC 20420  
www.va.gov

VIA Email: [56930-32750762@requests.muckrock.com](mailto:56930-32750762@requests.muckrock.com)

Mr. Jasper Craven  
MuckRock News  
DEPT MR 56930  
411A Highland Avenue  
Somerville, MA 02144-2516

**JUL 08 2019**

Re: FOIA Tracking Number **18-09582-F**

Dear Mr. Craven:

This is a response of your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) dated June 27, 2018, in which you requested:

- All emails between VA officials Jake Leinenkugel, Dick Leinenkugel, Scott Blackburn and Amazon officials Tim Bomke and Beau Higgins between June 1, 2017 and June 1, 2018. Keywords include "Amazon connection", "dash", "suicide", "polytrauma" and "partnership".

This response is for FOIA number **18-09582-F**, assigned to the Office of Information and Technology (OIT). Please refer to this number when communicating with the VA about this request.

You have been placed in the "news media" category, which means the requester is responsible for the fees associated with duplication, excluding the cost of the first 100 pages, which are free.

After a thorough search of our records, the Office of Information and Technology (OIT) found seven (7) pages of the following emails related to your request at no cost to you.

- Reconnecting with Amazon
- Amazon Connection

FOIA exemption 6 permits an Agency to withhold from disclosure personnel and medical files and similar files the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy. The information withheld, such as requestor names, personal email addresses, and mobile phone numbers are of a type that the privacy interest of the individual(s) to whom this information belongs outweighs any public interest in disclosure of this information. Accordingly, we have determined that this information should be withheld pursuant to Exemption 6.

You have the right to appeal this response if you do not agree with this determination.

You may appeal in writing to:

Department of Veterans Affairs  
General Counsel (024)  
810 Vermont Avenue  
Washington, DC 20420

You may also submit your appeal via facsimile to (202) 273-6388 or via email to [ogcfoiaappeals@va.gov](mailto:ogcfoiaappeals@va.gov). If you do appeal this determination, you must specify which part of the determination you are appealing. Please include a copy of your request and my letter with your appeal, and clearly state why you disagree with this determination. If you mail your appeal, both the front of the envelope and the letter should be clearly marked "FOIA Appeal". Please also include a daytime telephone number in case the Office of General Counsel needs additional information.

As an alternative to submitting an appeal, you may contact the VA FOIA Public Liaison, which was created to offer mediation services to resolve disputes between FOIA requesters and the VA. Using the VA FOIA Public Liaison does not affect your right to appeal.

You may contact the VA FOIA Public Liaison at:

Department of Veterans Affairs  
VA FOIA Public Liaison (005R1C)  
810 Vermont Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20420  
Email: [vacofoiaservice@va.gov](mailto:vacofoiaservice@va.gov); Telephone: (877) 750-3642; Fax: (202) 632-7581

As another alternative to submitting an appeal, you may also contact the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) whom was created to offer mediation services to resolve disputes between FOIA requesters and Federal Agencies. Using OGIS does not affect your right to appeal. You may contact OGIS in any of the following manners:

Office of Government Information Services  
National Archives & Records Administration  
8601 Adelphi Road  
College Park, MD 20740-6001  
Email: [ogis@nara.gov](mailto:ogis@nara.gov); Phone: (202) 741-5770; Toll-free: 1-877-684-6448; Fax: (202) 741-5769

This concludes the FOIA Service's response to your request.

We appreciate your interest in the VA. If you have any further questions concerning this letter, you may contact Jacqueline Short of my staff at (202) 632-7426.

Sincerely,



Ms. Doloras Johnson  
Director, VACO FOIA Service  
Quality, Performance, and Risk (QPR)  
Office of Information and Technology (OIT)

**From:** Higgins, Beau  
**To:** Shelby, Peter J.; Leinenkugel, Jake; Davis, Lynda  
**Cc:** Conley, Leah (SEC); Bomke, Tim  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] RE: Reconnecting with Amazon  
**Date:** Thursday, December 21, 2017 9:12:23 AM

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All,

I would like to propose a link up the week of 29 January as I am planning to attend the Veterans Employment Task Force mtg on the 30th sponsored by the Chamber. I have also cc'd Tim Bomke from my team who I know some of you have met as he will be a key player moving forward as well. Looking forward to moving this forward.  
Beau

Beau Higgins  
Senior Manager  
Military Recruiting Center of Excellence | Worldwide Operations Talent Acquisition  
Email: (b)(6)@amazon.com; Phone: 703-405-5125

-----Original Message-----

From: Shelby, Peter J. [mailto:Peter.Shelby@va.gov]  
Sent: Tuesday, December 19, 2017 7:03 PM  
To: Leinenkugel, Jake <Thomas.Leinenkugel@va.gov>; Higgins, Beau (b)(6)@amazon.com>; Davis, Lynda <Lynda.Davis@va.gov>  
Cc: Conley, Leah (HRA) <Leah.Conley@va.gov>  
Subject: RE: Reconnecting with Amazon

Awesome. Let's try to get something on the calendar in January. Jake - please provide any POCs at DoL to invite. I believe DC is right place to get everyone together, but am open to other suggestions.

Beau - let us know your thoughts and who else we should invite.

Leah - please coordinate this effort.

Sincerely,

Peter

Peter J. Shelby  
Assistant Secretary (HR&A)

202-461-7750  
peter.shelby@va.gov

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From: Leinenkugel, Jake  
Sent: Tuesday, December 19, 2017 11:15:31 AM  
To: Shelby, Peter J.; (b)(6)@amazon.com; Davis, Lynda  
Cc: Conley, Leah (HRA)  
Subject: RE: Reconnecting with Amazon

Retention has been an ongoing issue for some time and usually within the structures of larger companies. Need to find the why and also who does it well. We should partner with DOL as they also own a large chunk of Veteran

Employment. (I requested they assume lead role vs. VA in Modernization). I met some of Beau's counterparts earlier this summer and Beau also knows my Marine brother Dick quite well.

From: Shelby, Peter J.

Sent: Tuesday, December 19, 2017 1:33 PM

To: (b)(6)@amazon.com; Davis, Lynda; Leinenkugel, Jake

Cc: Conley, Leah (HRA)

Subject: Reconnecting with Amazon

Jake and Lynda,

I just got off the phone with Beau, retired Marine Colonel now leading veteran recruiting for Amazon (and married to a Green Bay native!!). Amazon committed to hiring 25,000 veterans and has been knocking it out of the park; however, veteran turnover is high (which is more systemic than local to Amazon). So, we now want to discuss veteran assimilation and retention. We want to get together with members of Lynda's team and Beau's to explore new ways of helping veterans succeed. Hopefully we can get something scheduled for January; I am very excited about exploring the possibilities!

Sincerely,

Peter

Peter J. Shelby

Assistant Secretary (HR&A)

202-461-7750

[Logo for the campaign ChooseVA that reads ChooseVA] [cid:image002.png@01D378CE.D685DED0]

**From:** Blackburn, Scott R.  
**To:** Leinenkugel, Jake; Prince-Wheeler, Latriece R.  
**Cc:** Carrington, Belinda L; Isaac, Charlyn; Venkataraman, Rashi  
**Subject:** RE: [EXTERNAL] Fwd: Amazon Connection  
**Date:** Saturday, June 17, 2017 1:09:00 PM

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Would love to be involved.

We have a great relationship with Amazon. Teresa Carlson (EVP of Amazon Web Services who oversees all US/Global government work) was on the MyVA Advisory Committee and is a close friend/mentor. I am working with her to get Jeff Bezos to talk at our next Senior Leader retreat in September. Rashi also has orchestrated multiple strategic partnerships with Amazon to include one recently involving Alexa. There is clearly a lot we can do with Amazon.

Btw – very interesting acquisition of Whole Foods by Amazon this week.

**From:** Leinenkugel, Jake  
**Sent:** Saturday, June 17, 2017 9:31 AM  
**To:** Prince-Wheeler, Latriece R.  
**Cc:** Carrington, Belinda L; Isaac, Charlyn; Blackburn, Scott R.  
**Subject:** FW: [EXTERNAL] Fwd: Amazon Connection

Latriece: Would like to see if we can schedule bringing Amazon Wounded Warrior research team in for one hour overview. They apparently are doing and have some great tools/ideas in regards to poly-trauma rehab and suicide prevention. Would like Scott to be available and maybe host meeting June 20th - June 23rd as they will have key folks in D.C. Could you please seek appropriate VHA folks and work with Belinda/Charlyn on scheduling. Thanks much!

V/R,

Jake

Sent with Good ([www.good.com](http://www.good.com))

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Jake Leinenkugel [(b)(6)]@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Saturday, June 17, 2017 09:11 AM Eastern Standard Time  
**To:** Leinenkugel, Jake  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Fwd: Amazon Connection

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Bomke, Tim [(b)(6)]@amazon.com>  
**Date:** Thu, Jun 15, 2017 at 8:23 PM  
**Subject:** RE: Amazon Connection  
**To:** Jake Leinenkugel [(b)(6)]@gmail.com>, Higgins, Beau [(b)(6)]@amazon.com>

Cc: Dick Leinenkugel (b)(6)@gmail.com>

Jake,

Our precise expectation would be providing technology solution(s) for use in poly-trauma rehab facilities and suicide prevention.

Best,

-Tim

**From:** Jake Leinenkugel (b)(6)@gmail.com]

**Sent:** Sunday, May 28, 2017 8:01 AM

**To:** Bomke, Tim (b)(6)@amazon.com>; Higgins, Beau (b)(6)@amazon.com>

**Cc:** Dick Leinenkugel (b)(6)@gmail.com>; Jake Leinenkugel (b)(6)@gmail.com>

**Subject:** Re: Amazon Connection

**Tim:** Let me know your precise expectation within VA context. I'm currently heading 3 major projects for WH & Secretary next 120 days, seriously absorbing all of my time & focus. (Policy, Branding & Reform), I can help connect to correct people and project teams.

**On Thu, May 25, 2017 at 4:10 PM Bomke, Tim (b)(6)@amazon.com> wrote:**

Hi Jake,

Just coming up for air after a week of several events. It would be great to connect and learn more about our mutual efforts. How is your schedule looking next week?

Best,

-Tim

**From:** Higgins, Beau

**Sent:** Wednesday, May 17, 2017 10:59 AM

**To:** Jake Leinenkugel (b)(6)@gmail.com>

**Cc:** Dick Leinenkugel (b)(6)@gmail.com>; Leinenkugel, Jake <thomas.leinenkugel@va.gov>; Bomke, Tim (b)(6)@amazon.com>

**Subject:** RE: Amazon Connection

Jake,

Thanks for the feedback and I am very interested in getting this moving. Regret this Friday I am personally off the net as my oldest daughter is graduating from high school, but I have cc'd Tim Bomke who runs Amazon's Wounded Warrior program and can help drive this forward. Thank in advance and look forward to getting to DC soon to meet in person and keep up the momentum.

Beau

Beau Higgins  
Senior Manager  
Military Recruiting Center of Excellence | Worldwide Operations Talent Acquisition  
Email: (b)(6)@amazon.com; Phone: 703-405-5125

**From:** Jake Leinenkugel (b)(6)@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 17, 2017 2:44 AM  
**To:** Higgins, Beau (b)(6)@amazon.com>  
**Cc:** Dick Leinenkugel (b)(6)@gmail.com>; Leinenkugel, Jake <thomas.leinenkugel@va.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: Amazon Connection

Beau: Secretary Shulkin loves Amazon and references Jeff's "Day One" work mantra weekly (VA needs to replicate). We also are announcing a "Getting to Zero" initiative on suicides. Why don't you and I connect this Friday for next step approach. Is it possible for you and your initiative team to come to VA to meet with our VA Suicide Project leads? We are in Boston at Brain Trust....a terrific collaboration being lead by GE, Optum, IBM, UnitedHealth and major research hospitals on brain trauma, TBI, PTSD and Suicidal indicators until late Thursday afternoon. We have to do more as 20 Veterans a day continue down this path.

V/R,

Jake  
(202) 461-4879 (Office)  
(b)(6) (Cell)

On Tue, May 16, 2017 at 11:14 PM Higgins, Beau (b)(6)@amazon.com> wrote:

Jake,  
Circling back on this to get a pulse check on best way to engage with the WH on telling the veterans employment story. Great story to tell and would love to work with the WH on that.  
Beau

Beau Higgins  
Senior Manager  
Military Recruiting Center of Excellence | Worldwide Operations Talent Acquisition  
Email: (b)(6)@amazon.com; Phone: 703-405-5125

**From:** Jake Leinenkugel (b)(6)@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Saturday, April 08, 2017 7:04 AM  
**To:** Higgins, Beau (b)(6)@amazon.com>  
**Cc:** Leinenkugel, Dick (b)(6)@tenthandblake.com>  
**Subject:** Re: Amazon Connection

Beau: Small world and looking forward to meeting you. Amazon has been terrific with assisting Veterans and I will connect you to proper folks within WH. Good friend Jennifer Korn is leading this work and the VA may also be interested in asking Amazon

for ideas with VA apps and customer service. We are getting 3 top detailees from Apple in May. I will reach out to Jennifer for connection. Also sending you my contact info.

V/R,

Jake Leinenkugel  
Senior White House Advisor -VA  
(202) 461-4879 (Office)  
(b)(6)

On Saturday, April 8, 2017, Higgins, Beau (b)(6) @amazon.com> wrote:

Dick,

Thanks for the intro and it was great to reconnect this week in DC. Appreciate your continued support of the veteran community.

Jake,

As noted below, Amazon has an idea about creating a "dash button" that may be able to help efforts focused on veteran suicide. I haven't been able to get a solid point of contact at the VA who might want to pursue this technology and was hoping you may be able to assist. In addition, last May Jeff Bezos came to the White House and made a pledge to hire 25,000 veterans over 5 years. The anniversary of that pledge is coming up and Amazon would be interested in sharing our progress to date with the white house (about a third of the way there already). Would love to find the white house point of contact for the Joining Forces Initiative portfolio and try to coordinate an event/announcement of some type. Thanks in advance, Semper Fi, Beau

Beau Higgins  
Senior Manager  
Military Recruiting Center of Excellence | Worldwide Operations Talent Acquisition  
Email: (b)(6) @amazon.com; Phone: 703-405-5125

**From:** Leinenkugel, Dick (b)(6) @TenthAndBlake.com]  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 06, 2017 8:13 AM  
**To:** (b)(6) @gmail.com  
**Cc:** Higgins, Beau (b)(6) @amazon.com>  
**Subject:** Amazon Connection

Jake,

I ran into a Marine Corps acquaintance at last evening's Veterans Jobs Mission event. I met Beau Higgins at LeJeune two years ago when I did a beer dinner for General Lukeman. Beau's wife is from Wisconsin and they visited the brewery later that year. Beau is now out of the Corps and is heading up Military Talent Acquisition for Amazon. Beau mentioned that they have a technology idea that could help prevent veteran suicide and he is looking to pitch the idea to someone in the VA. Sounds like you might be able to point him in the right direction.

Beau Higgins



Military Talent Acquisition  
703-405-5125  
(b)(6)@amazon.com

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